

**Testimony IN SUPPORT of House Bill No. 6578 - An Act Concerning Participation in the Electoral Process; and  
IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill No. 1017 - An Act Concerning Election Administration**

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Senator Mae Flexer (Co-Chair), Representative Dan Fox (Co-Chair), Senator Rob Sampson (Ranking Member), Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco (Ranking Member) and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee:

My name is Jennifer McPherson, I am a voter from Southington. Passing HB 6578, but with needed improvement, is extremely important to me because not only codifying but also **expanding Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to other state agencies** is a common-sense reform that saves taxpayer money and helps increase democratic participation.

This bill codifies AVR, as it is happening now at the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, into state law and I applaud that first step. However we must **also expand AVR to the Dept. of Social Services (DSS), HUSKY, Access Health CT, state colleges and universities and other state agencies**. *This can help residents who are working long hours and don't have time to register to vote at the town hall, because of the town hall's limited hours of operation. This would also benefit our treasured elderly residents who deserve any and all accommodations to vote since they have worked, paid taxes, and voted for decades. This would also help people with chronic illnesses (of which I am one) who find it difficult to try and get to the town hall to register.*

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) **will enhance the security and integrity of our elections** by eliminating outdated addresses and duplicative registrations through an automatic process—**which will deliver the most accurate voter rolls to cities and towns**. **Eliminating duplicate registrations significantly reduces the workload for localities that could be susceptible to confusion on election day.** *This seems like common sense to me. If there is one location for voter information, that would save taxpayer money.*

**77% of Connecticut voters support Automatic Voter Registration** in a recent Secure Democracy public opinion poll. Across the country, localities have **saved an average of about \$3.54 in labor costs per registration** by moving from a paper to an electronic method. Nineteen states have versions of AVR.

Restoring the right to vote to people re-entering their communities on parole is also extremely important to me because **disenfranchising people on parole sustains a racist system of inequality in our state**. Those on parole are concentrated in only a handful of Connecticut communities—those with significant populations of Black and Latino people. *People who are re-entering the community have paid their debt to society. There should be no question of reinstating their voting rights. Especially since they will likely be re-entering the workforce AND PAYING TAXES!*


Connecticut has the most stringent criminal disenfranchisement laws in the Northeast and it is the only state in the region that still prohibits those on parole from casting a ballot. Furthermore, **felony disenfranchisement laws became widespread in the United States after the Civil War as a way for former Confederate states to circumvent Reconstruction amendments and stamp out Black political power**. 20 states allow people on parole to vote and just two weeks ago New York's state senate voted to restore voting rights to those on parole.

Preventing formerly incarcerated people from voting **undermines good-faith attempts at reintegration**, and artificially decreases the voting power of the communities in which people on parole reside. *Isn't the purpose of incarceration to rehabilitate someone who needed to learn their lesson? Why continue to punish someone who may be trying to become a better person. That only perpetuates recidivism and continues to keep our prisons full.*

Lastly, passing SB 1017 is also absolutely necessary so that voters currently qualifying to vote absentee **retain the freedom they had in 2020 to use their town's official, secure ballot drop boxes.** There is no reason to take this away. As mentioned above, many people work different hours, or have chronic illnesses, or lack of childcare, etc. that makes it difficult to vote. This would help. And as was the result of the many voter fraud court cases, no court, including the Supreme Court, found any evidence of voter fraud in this past election, where Covid was making everything more difficult. Mail in voting and drop boxes should be a normal routine for voting going forward. Don't we want more people to vote?

I urge you to pass HB 6578 **but with expansion of Automatic Voter Registration beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies—and I urge you to pass SB 1017.**

Thank you,



Jennifer McPherson  
Southington, CT